



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
NAVAL AIR STATION WHITING FIELD
7550 USS ESSEX STREET SUITE 200
MILTON FLORIDA 32570-6155

5830
Ser N00J/0025
28 JAN 2022

From: Commanding Officer, Naval Air Station Whiting Field, FL
To: (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

Subj: COMMAND INVESTIGATION INTO ALLEGATIONS OF CREATING A HOSTILE
WORK ENVIRONMENT WITHIN THE SECURITY DEPARTMENT AT NAVAL AIR
STATION WHITING FIELD, FL DURING THE PERIOD OF DECEMBER 2020-
JANUARY 2022

Ref: (a) JAGMAN, Chapter II

1. This appoints you, per Chapter II of reference (a), to inquire into the facts and circumstances surrounding the allegations made against Deputy Security Officer (b) (5), (b) (6), Watch Commander Mrs. Cameo Ringer, (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) and Administrative Assistant (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) in creating a hostile work environment within the Security Department Naval Air Station Whiting Field during December 2020 - January 2022.

2. Investigate the alleged hostile work environment and allegations of timekeeping irregularities, as well as instances of toxicity, and any fault, neglect, or responsibility therefore. Report personnel contacted, materials reviewed, summary and findings, and recommendations in letter form by 28 February 2022, unless an extension of time is granted. If you have not previously done so, read chapter 0203 of reference (a) before beginning your investigation.

3. During the course of your investigation, you may seek legal advice from (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) JAGC, USN, Deputy Staff Judge Advocate, Naval Air Station Pensacola at (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) relates to uniformed active duty members. You may seek advice from (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) Navy Region Southeast Office of General Counsel, at (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) for matters involving civilian employees.


PAUL N. FLORES

Copy to:
(b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

NAS Whiting Field Command Directed Investigation

Report of Investigation

19 APR 2022

Subj: COMMAND DIRECTED INVESTIGATION INTO ALLEGATIONS OF HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENT & TIMEKEEPING IRREGULARITIES

Ref: (1) JAGMAN, Chapter II
(2) OPNAVINST 5354.1H (Hostile Work Environment Definition)
(3) NASWFINST 12610.2F (Time and Attendance and Alternative Work Schedules)
(4) DoDI 1020.04 (Harassment Prevention and Responses for DoD Civilian Employees)
(5) SECNAVINST 5211.5F (DON Privacy Act Program)

Encl: (1) Appointing Order

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(9) Cameo Ringer Interview Transcript

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Background

1. On 28 January 2022, NAS Whiting Field (NASWF) Commanding Officer (CO) appointed Mr. Ken Smith and Mr. Joe Molina to conduct a Command Directed Investigation (CDI) into various allegations within the installation Security Department. Specifically, to obtain facts and circumstances regarding allegations of a hostile working environment and timekeeping irregularities.

CONTROLLED UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION

Summary of Complaint

2. The appointment letter of 28 Jan 2022 identified (5) potential subjects, following are the specific allegations:

- a. That Cameo Ringer, GS-0083-08, Supervisory Police Officer, created a hostile work environment from December 2020 to January 2022.
- b. That Cameo Ringer, GS-0083-08, Supervisory Police Officer, violated time and attendance policies from December 2020 to January 2022.

c. (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

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Standards

3. OPNAVINST 5354.1H, dated 3 Nov 2021, Appendix C, defines Hostile Work Environment as: "An environment which prevents members from functioning to their full capacity, free of harassment and prohibited discrimination. A hostile work environment unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance. It need not result in concrete psychological harm to the victim but need only be perceived by a reasonable person and is perceived by the victim, as hostile or offensive. Behavior does not need to occur in the physical workplace in order to create a hostile work environment." NOTE: The aforementioned policy is applicable to military members only, however, we found that the definition could apply to any workplace whether military or civilian.

4. DoDI 1020.04, dated 30 June 2020, "Section 3.1. HARASSMENT ADVERSELY AFFECTING THE WORK ENVIRONMENT. The conduct prohibited by this policy includes, but is broader than, the legal definitions of harassment and sexual harassment. Behavior that is unwelcome or offensive to a reasonable person and that interferes with work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment is prohibited. All allegations of harassment must be evaluated under the totality of the circumstances, to include an assessment of the nature of the conduct and the context in which the conduct occurred. In some instances, a

single incident of harassing behavior is prohibited harassment whereas, in other circumstances, repeated or recurring harassing behavior may be required to constitute prohibited harassment.

Facts/Evidence

5. On 31 January 2022 we queried the NAS Whiting Field Command Managed Equal Opportunity (CMEO) Manager, (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) requesting Security Department Defense Organizational Climate Surveys (DEOCS) for the past two cycles. (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7) responded on the same day and indicated that the DEOCS survey conducted from 16 February to 04 March 2021 did not yield results due to insufficient responses from both civilian and active duty personnel. The survey requires a minimum response 16 civilians and/or 16 active duty personnel. At the time of survey, there were 18 active duty personnel onboard with 7 participating in the survey and 51 civilians with 15 submitting surveys.

6. (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) also stated that the DEOCS cycle prior 2021, conducted in 20 February 2020 combined all of the NAS Whiting Field responses into one survey and that he was unable to distinguish Security department input from other installation departments.

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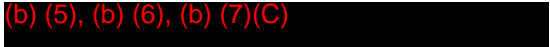
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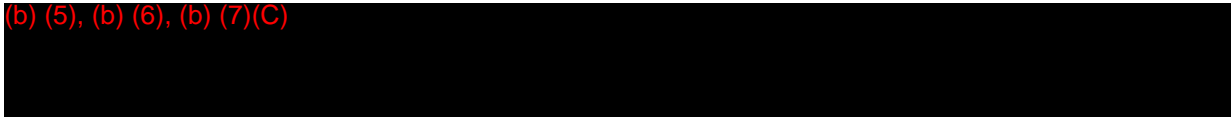
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Testimony of James Nisewonger

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Testimony of Cameo Ringer

105. Cameo Ringer, NAS Whiting Field Security Department, GS-08, Supervisory Police Officer interviewed on 16 February 2022, stated has been a civil service employee since 2016 and assigned to NAS Whiting Field Security since 2019. Her previous assignment was as a police officer in China Lake, California.

106. When she arrived at NAS Whiting Field there were no problems at all, the SECO was a Lieutenant Commander (LCDR). When the LCDR left and LT Eno arrived there was a transition period, but after that it became clear that there was no control. “Things that, you know, may have started as a personality conflict, or even an outside unrelated thing, there should’ve been some intervention to ensure it didn’t fall over into the police department, and there’s not.” This included the SECO, Mr. Long, and Chief Lopez.

107. She has spoken with the CO, and numerous times with the XO but got the feeling that they did not want to intervene. She stated that the previous SECO's saw Mr. Long as a problem and a big driving force in the hostilities and they (SECOs) took control of the situation. She believes that LT Eno comes across as scared to take control.

108. She described a situation where Mr. Long provided policy that was later contradicted by LT Eno. LT Eno clarified in a Watch Commanders meeting that only he would make policy changes. She recalled that the differing policies caused confusion and frustration.

109. There continues to be a lot of finger pointing going on. For instance, recently LT Eno told her something that he said came from Human Resources (HR), but when she inquired with HR they told her that they would not answer her questions and for her to use the chain of command. She believes that LT Eno doesn't know the answers and is guessing, instead of getting the answers from HR.

110. Active duty Navy personnel lack the knowledge of dealing with civil service employees. "They're put in charge of civilians and not trained on simple HR matters."

111. Master-At-Arms (MA) and civilian police officer work well together. The problems start with the higher level military personnel, "It's when you start getting to the Chief and higher that the ones that are actually the supervisors managing civilians, and that's where it's not working."

112. A lot of personnel have manager type access to SLDCADA, although many of the military don't know the timekeeping policies or rules. Watch Commanders and other personnel also have access to SLDCADA. She stated that she is unaware of anyone misusing their supervisory SLDCADA access.

113. Concerning time and attendance procedures she described a few situations where other Watch Commanders reported issues with personnel reporting for duty 15-20 minutes late but nothing was done to hold them accountable. She also stated that Captain Bristol reported to her that Major Nisewonger was assigned as an Field Training Officer (FTO) but failed to report on time for his duties or would tell Captain Bristol he was on a break when asked to do something.

114. MA1 Fillman, who recently transferred to another command, would occasionally certify civilian timecards in SLDCADA. Speaking of Mr. and Mrs. Nisewonger, Mrs. Ringer stated, "I heard him personally say at one point he refused to continue to do certain timecards because he knew they were wrong so he would not be a certifying official, and he brought that up to higher, but I know he was frustrated with it, but simply he said I will not continue to certify this, I know it's fraudulent."

115. In around October 2021 (NOTE: it was 16 November 2021), Mr. Ringer sent an email to Security department management regarding staff working hours. The email did not contain names, titles, or positions but questioned the core working hours of Security staff personnel. Approximately 1 ½ hours after the email was sent, Mr. Long forwarded the email to Mr. Nisewonger. This was known because the Nisewongers included a copy of the email in their court injunction paperwork. "And why did he forward that, other than to just stirring this up...so

that violated the trust and being able to go to bring something to the chain of command, but why send that now to somebody who's not in the chain of command other than to cause problems there."

116. In May or June of 2021 Mrs. Ringer filed an EEO complaint against Mr. Long that has not been resolved. She described the incident as "just too much flirtation" between a supervisor and subordinate.

117. Since filing the EEO complaint she has been the subject of retaliatory treatment from Mr. Long. It's not clear to her if the way she is being treated is because she's the only female Watch Commander or because it's retaliatory. She addressed the issue with LT Eno who didn't seem to take the matter seriously.

118. Regarding the Nisewongers, Mrs. Ringer stated that prior to November 9th (alleged assault) she had almost no contact with either Mr. or Mrs. Nisewonger. She explained that there was a lot of tension in the department regarding the choices that the Nisewongers made, specifically she was talking about dating each other while both were still married and that Erin's ex-husband was also working in the Security department while the affair was going on. She stated that, Mr. Scarcliff, police officer and now ex-husband of Mrs. Nisewonger has since transferred to NAS Pensacola.

119. Mrs. Ringer described situations where Mr. Nisewonger would purposely show up on the training range when Mr. Scarcliff was there. There were a number of personnel who reported to Mrs. Ringer that the idea of a Trainer, who was having an affair with another officer's wife, showing up in a location where one or both were armed created a dangerous situation.

120. She described the alleged assault which led to a criminal complaint filed by Mrs. Nisewonger on November 9th 2021. Although the incident occurred onboard the installation, Mrs. Ringer stated that Mrs. Nisewonger made a complaint to Santa Rosa County Sheriff who declined the case and to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) who is currently investigating the incident.

121. After the incident Mr. and Mrs. Nisewonger filed for restraining orders against the Ringers and Mr. Abbott. Mrs. Ringer stated that after the alleged assault Mr. Nisewonger would approach Mr. Ringer acting as if nothing had happened, almost like he was taunting Mr. Ringer. Mrs. Nisewonger began spending more time in the Training office which made Mr. Ringer uncomfortable, due to the pending NCIS investigation. Mr. Ringer brought his concern to the XO who tasked the Training supervisor to ask Mrs. Nisewonger to avoid the Training office. Mrs. Ringer stated that in the court restraining order documentation, Mrs. Nisewonger indicated she was being harassed after being told not visit the Training office.

122. Mrs. Nisewonger complains about everyone. Seems that about every 10 days Mrs. Nisewonger is in Mr. Long's office yelling about someone. She once overheard Mrs. Nisewonger complaining that she wasn't copied on email from Chief Lopez.

123. Management was not equally distributing training opportunities to staff employees and that discipline was unfairly administered. She described an incident where SECO approved her to attend a no cost training in Panama City but was later told it was cancelled by Mr. Long, saying that “we can’t justify that.”

124. Mrs. Ringer discussed the previous CDI conduct by Mr. Slusher which investigated an allegation of improper evidence handling. Once the investigation was completed she received two different responses from management. The SECO stated that Mrs. Ringer was found not to have violated any standards where Mr. Long indicated that there was not enough evidence to determine if policies were violated. This was an example of how differently management officials responded to the same report.

125. Her subordinates would describe her “in pretty good light.” She tries to help her shift personnel and has been told that they appreciate her for trying to find the right answers.

126. Mr. Long is the crux of the hostilities within Security. “He tends to pin people against each other, and he and the chain of command in general like to point fingers. They have a problem putting anything in writing.”

127. She stated, “The current chain of command does not care about fixing the department and ensuring that’s working, they care about just Navy stuff, and I know that’s their job too, but if they’re gonna be working in this blended force and in charge of it, they need to be paying attention to it because it’s frustrating everybody.”

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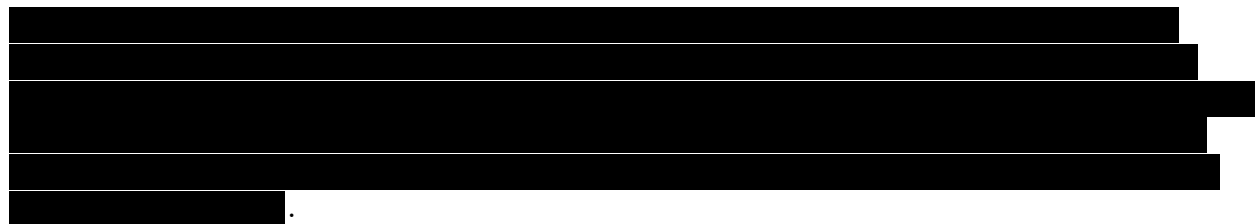
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Documentary Evidence

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Analysis and Discussion

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194. OPNAVINST 5354.1H, defines a hostile work environment as one that prevents members from functioning to their full capacity, free of harassment, and prohibited discrimination. “A hostile work environment unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance.

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Recommendations

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Time & Attendance

Standard

211. NASWFINST 12610.2F, dated 28 Sep 2017, para 4.c., states in part, “Lunch Break/Physical Fitness...Lunch breaks are a 30-minute non-compensable break that may not be

taken at the beginning or end of the work day. Supervisors have the authority to approve an employee's request for a non-compensable lunch break of no more than 60 minutes. However, the extended work day will be reflected in the Standard Labor Data Collection Distribution and Application program (SLDCADA). If required to work through the lunch period, prior approval of the overtime/compensatory time to work will be authorized by the CO, XO, or the applicable Department Head (if authorized by the CO to approve overtime/compensatory time). If approved, the overtime/compensatory time will be requested and approved in the OT/CT section in SLDCADA. Employees may not work during the established lunch period in order to shorten the workday."

212. SECNAVINST 5211.5F, dated 20 May 2019, para 5.a.(3), states, "DON personnel have an affirmative responsibility to protect an individual's privacy when maintaining Personally Identifiable Information (PII) about an individual."

213. SECNAVINST 5211.5F, enclosure (2), para (10), defines, "Official Need to Know. Within the context of this instruction, this term is used when DON officials and employees have a demonstrated need for the use of any record or the information contained therein in the performance of their official duties."

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Documentary Evidence

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Analysis and Discussion

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Conclusion

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Recommendation

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Investigator(s)

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Interviews conducted

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